

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex on Thursday, 26 January 2017

Present:

Councillor

Gavin Callaghan
Wendy Schmitt
Godfrey Isaacs
Bob Shepherd
Mike Lilley
John Jowers
Tony Durcan
Penny Channer
Lynda McWilliams
John Gili-Ross
Kay Odysseos

Representing

Basildon Borough Council
Braintree District Council (Vice-Chairman)
Castle Point Borough Council
Chelmsford City Council
Colchester Borough Council
Essex County Council (Chairman)
Harlow District Council
Maldon District Council
Tendring District Council
Independent Member
Independent Member

Apologies for Absence

Paul Barrell
Gary Waller
June Lumley
Mark Flewitt
Carlo Guglielmi with
Lynda McWilliams as his substitute
Sue McPherson
Jim Gordon

Brentwood Borough Council
Epping Forest District Council
Rochford District Council
Southend Borough Council
Tendring District Council
Thurrock Borough Council
Uttlesford District Council

The following Officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:

Anna Hook	Head of Commissioning Growing Essex Communities
Alex Polak	Scrutiny and Corporate Governance Manager
Fiona Lancaster	Committee Officer, Essex County Council

Roger Hirst, Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, was in attendance throughout and supported by Susannah Hancock, Chief Executive and Charles Garbett, Treasurer.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Wendy Schmitt reported that cheaper gym memberships for police

officers were now available at local leisure centres in the Braintree district, and that it may be possible to organise this in other areas.

2 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded Panel members to declare any specific interests as appropriate throughout the meeting.

3 Questions to the Chairman from Members of the Public

There were no questions.

4 The proposed Police Precept for 2017/18

The Panel considered report EPCP/01/17 and accompanying appendices by the Commissioner setting out the proposed precept for 2017/18.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- The Panel welcomed the new report format and the clarity of information provided. However, the Members indicated that more detail was needed on how the benefits would be measured and how an increase in council tax receipts could be shown to be making a difference. The Commissioner undertook to provide the Panel with more detailed information on baseline measures.
- Additional council tax receipts would be used to invest in providing more local visible policing and tackling serious organised crime. Essex Police would continue to collaborate with the Kent Force, and they would put equal investment into activities such as the development and introduction of new technology.
- The Panel noted that 41 extra police officers would be recruited to bring the total up to 2,850 FTEs. There would also be 11 additional firearms officers who would be specialised and work full time on these duties.
- The Panel questioned the rationale of recruiting more police officers rather than PCSOs. The Commissioner explained that although PCSOs provided good channels with local communities and helped challenge anti-social behaviour, relative to their range of powers, they were more expensive to retain.
- The Panel asked how the public could be reassured that improvements in performance would be made. In response, the Commissioner commented that productivity had already improved with the better use of technology and that processes were becoming more efficient. For example, the quicker processing of people through custody.
- The Commissioner reported that more investment was needed to speed up the recruitment and number of Specials in Essex. Commitment from local community partners was vital in attracting volunteers. There was no

intention to recruit Specials and then re-deploy them outside of their local communities. The Panel indicated that it had high expectations of the impact Specials would need to make to improve visible policing.

- The Commissioner acknowledged that the 101 telephone system was unsatisfactory and reported that additional staff were needed to manage the demand from emergency calls. The re-launch of the website was intended to reduce the number of calls by encouraging more residents to report crime online. The Commissioner indicated that he would like to see a shift towards 80% of residents using the online reporting system.
- A national solution was needed to deal with the challenge of cyber crime and on how to prevent people becoming victims.
- The Panel noted the benefits gained following the roll out of smart phones to police officers, and on how further investment could help improve mobile policing and efficiencies. Members noted that the Force Control Room (FCR) did not allocate calls to stations, and welcomed the suggestion that a visit to the FCR may be helpful to their understanding.
- Finance Business Partners and a new Director post were needed to ensure that budgeted resources were closely aligned with the Police and Crime Plan priorities, and to enable greater budget delegation to local police commanders. The Panel indicated that it would like to see more defined parameters on the expenditure in this area, and understand what benefits were anticipated with the new appointments.
- By 2021, the Commissioner expected to have around £30m to invest in a new Police Headquarters.
- Discussions are ongoing regarding the Government's formula grant and the Commissioner's expectation is that changes would lead to a more favourable outcome for Essex Police. Further details on the process were expected in the autumn.
- How the Police work with Community Safety Hubs to advise residents that "no cold-calling" areas can be set up.
- Some Members expressed concern regarding the increase in the numbers of unsolved crimes and asked how residents would be able to see if the increased investment had a positive impact.
- Local residents want to see a reduction in rural crime and this was a high priority for the Commissioner.
- The Panel welcomed the additional investment earmarked to tackle gangs and the increase in burglaries across the County.
- The Panel acknowledged that increased reporting of domestic crime meant that this had a negative impact on the statistics for this area of

activity.

Following consideration of the report and having listened to the Commissioner's justification of the need for an increase, the Chairman invited the Panel to vote on the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase of 3.25%, equivalent to an increase of £4.95 a year from £152.10 to £157.05 for a Band D property and therefore raising £3.1m of additional council tax receipts.

DECIDED:

That the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase of 3.25 % be accepted.

5 Ethics and Integrity

The Panel considered report EPCP/02/17 by the Secretary to the Panel concerning the proposal that an Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee be constituted to advise and hold the Commissioner to account.

The Commissioner requested that the terms of reference should also include the Sub-Committee's support on his performance. Following discussion of this issue and the concern expressed by Members that this could prevent the Sub-Committee from carrying out its role as a 'critical friend', the Panel **agreed** that the terms of reference would be re-worded to include that the Sub-Committee would scrutinise "and where appropriate, support the Commissioner".

Three volunteers were sought to serve on the new Sub-Committee along with the Chairman of the Panel who would be an *ex officio* member. The Panel **agreed** that Councillors Penny Channer and Godfrey Isaacs, and Independent Member Kay Odysseos, would be appointed. Councillor Bob Shepherd and John Gili-Ross, Independent Member, would act as substitutes. Members were reassured that two meetings would be scheduled in advance, and that whenever possible, issues would be dealt with remotely.

6 Forward Look

The Panel considered report EPCP/03/17 by the Secretary to the Panel concerning the planning of the Panel's business.

The Panel **agreed** to the suggestion to add the secure emergency services radio system to the business planned for the July meeting.

The Chairman asked Members to **note** that **Thursday 1 June 2017 (at 2.30 pm)** had been identified as the most suitable meeting date after the County Council elections in May, and that 29 June could now be released from diaries.

The report was otherwise **agreed**.

7 The Police and Crime Commissioner to update the Panel on On-going issues

The Commissioner provided the Panel with an update on the following:

- The Policing and Crime Bill was expected to receive Royal Assent on 31 January. Subject to this timing being achieved, the Commissioner intended to put forward a revised business case for joint governance of the Police and Fire Services in Essex to the Fire Authority's meeting on 15 February, and then to the Essex Police and Crime Panel on 16 February. This would be followed by a formal public consultation period. Assuming there were no major revisions or delays, the proposed changes would take effect on 1 October 2017, otherwise the next date of transfer would be 1 April 2018. The Panel indicated that it would want to hear about the points raised by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 15 February.

[Afternote: The Bill received Royal Assent on 31 January 2017].

- Panel members were reminded that re-offending rates were shared with Community Safety Hub partners.
- The Commissioner confirmed that the Chief Constable, Stephen Kavanagh, had been short-listed as a candidate for the Metropolitan Police Commissioner role. He would be disappointed to lose him if he was successful with his application, and acknowledged it could be difficult to find a successor.

8 **Date of Next Meeting**

The Panel **noted** that the next meeting would take place at 2.30 pm on Thursday 16 February 2017, in Committee Room 1, County Hall, and that this would be preceded by a private pre-meeting starting at 1.45 pm.

Chairman